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RP ASU 77-008
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CONTENTS

Evidence That Marshal Ogarkov Is the Top-Ranking First Deputy Minister of Defense	1
Soviet Policy in the Middle East	4

This publication is prepared by the USSR Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. The views presented are the personal judgments of analysts on significant events or trends in Soviet foreign and domestic affairs. Although the analysis centers on political matters, it discusses politically relevant economic or strategic trends when appropriate. Differences of opinion are sometimes aired to present consumers with a range of analytical views. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles or to

25X1

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RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977

25X1A

Evidence That Marshal Ogarkov Is the Top-Ranking First
Deputy Minister of Defense

Reports in *Krasnaya Zvezda* on February 23 and March 18 indicate that Marshal N. V. Ogarkov is the ranking first deputy minister of defense in the Soviet military hierarchy. Both reports listed Ogarkov ahead of Marshal V. G. Kulikov, Ogarkov's predecessor as chief of the General Staff and now commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact joint armed forces. This contrasts with the way in which Kulikov had been given pride of place in the announcement of their reassignments on January 8 and in the announcement of their promotions to their present ranks on January 14.

The commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact forces has been listed ahead of the chief of the General Staff when the two had appeared together since the creation of the Warsaw Pact command. This rule was followed even when the Warsaw Pact commander in chief was the more junior of the two in his date of rank as a Marshal of the Soviet Union or in his number of years as a first deputy minister. The most extreme case occurred during 1967-1971, when Marshal I. I. Yakubovsky was listed ahead of Marshal M. V. Zakharov even though Zakharov enjoyed seniority both in date of rank and in years as a first deputy minister of defense.

The decision to list Ogarkov ahead of Kulikov is particularly striking because Kulikov enjoys seniority as a first deputy minister and is the only man who has ever held both the top post in the Warsaw Pact command and the top post at the General Staff. When viewed in this light, the recent protocol listings indicate that Kulikov's transfer is a setback for his personal ambitions. He has relinquished a position of greater authority without having taken at least a nominal step upward in the military hierarchy.

The placement of Ogarkov ahead of Kulikov may have been partly due to Ogarkov's close personal ties to

RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977

Defense Minister Ustinov. Kulikov has reportedly been on less than close terms with Ustinov since the latter's appointment as defense minister a year ago, and this may have been another contributing factor. It seems unlikely, however, that the decision to break with a tradition that has been followed since 1955 was prompted solely by the relationships among the three main figures.

The move may have been designed to clarify Ogarkov's position as the top-ranking first deputy under Ustinov with the primary responsibility for national security matters. The chief of the General Staff plays a key role in determining the Soviet position on SALT questions, whereas the commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact forces probably has relatively little influence. While the Warsaw Pact commander in chief undoubtedly contributes to the Soviet deliberations on the MBFR negotiations, the chief of the General Staff probably has the primary role in coordinating the views of the Soviet force components and integrating them with the views of the other Warsaw Pact member states.

It is also possible that Ogarkov's hand is being strengthened to make it easier for him to prod his colleagues in the High Command on such matters as making more efficient use of resources. Ogarkov is believed to favor the adoption of modern methods of weighing alternatives and establishing priorities, and he may be equally in favor of the rapid introduction of automated command and control systems and other technological innovations. If so, he will need all the support he can muster in order to persuade other senior military leaders--for example, General I. G. Pavlovsky, the deputy minister commanding the ground forces--to abandon their foot-dragging on such matters.

The decision in favor of a new pecking order within the High Command may have been prompted in part by concern over the succession problem facing the Soviet leadership. Brezhnev and 5 of the 14 other top Soviet leaders are already 70 or older, and a change at the top could trigger a series of moves, including the transfer of Defense Minister Ustinov to an even more important post--perhaps as successor to Premier Kosygin. It is also possible that Ustinov, who will be 69 in October, will soon leave the scene.

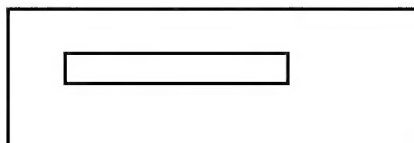
RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977

SECRET

In either event, the Soviet leadership will be hard pressed to find another civilian as qualified as Ustinov for the top post at the Defense Ministry and might hand the job back to a professional soldier. In the past, Kulikov would have been regarded as the top contender for the job, and he may now have the inside track despite the change in the pecking order. If so, the decision to list Ogarkov ahead of Kulikov may have been intended to reduce speculation over the possibility that Kulikov is being groomed to take over Ustinov's post. It could also be designed to enhance Ogarkov's credentials, if only because he appears to be the man on the scene at present whose approach to defense matters seems to be most like Ustinov's.

25X1

RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977



25X1

Soviet Policy in the Middle East

Recent political and diplomatic initiatives by the Soviets with respect to the Middle East should be viewed in the context of chronic Soviet concern that they will again be excluded from the negotiating process and thus suffer a further decline in position in the area. These initiatives are largely a reaction to US efforts to move peace talks forward rapidly--and, the Soviets fear, unilaterally. The Soviets have reaffirmed their strong endorsement of the Geneva Conference, in which they have an established role as co-chairman with the US, and are directing their energies toward promoting early resumption of the conference and heading off any other approach to the issue.

In recent weeks, the Soviets have conducted their own offensive designed to counter US moves and demonstrate the USSR's essential role in negotiations. To this end, they have conducted a series of meetings and consultations paralleling those in the US. The visit of PLO leader Arafat to Moscow, for example, occurred at the same time that Egyptian President Sadat was in the US. The high-level Soviet reception of Arafat was clearly an attempt to emphasize Soviet leverage in the negotiating process.

25X1

In conjunction with their political moves, the Soviets have recently made a major effort to project an innovative image with respect to the substance of the issues in the Arab-Israeli dispute. This effort was

RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977

heralded in Brezhnev's trade union speech of March 21, in which the Soviet leader laid out detailed Soviet proposals for a settlement. These proposals have subsequently been reinforced both publicly and privately by Soviet spokesmen.

The most significant shift in the Soviet position has been on the question of Palestinian participation from the beginning in the Geneva Conference. This shift was probably prompted by Soviet recognition that this issue is an obstacle to the reconvening of the conference and therefore provides an incentive to negotiate outside the Geneva framework. In addition, the Soviets have reportedly felt somewhat isolated on the question because they perceived that both the Egyptian and Syrian positions were softening.

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25X1

Brezhnev's trade union speech and subsequent Soviet commentary have suggested that the Soviets might also be flexible on the issue of final borders for Israel. While stipulating that Israel must withdraw to its 1967 borders, the Soviets have indicated that final borders could be determined following such a withdrawal, suggesting that these borders might differ somewhat from those of 1967. To bolster this impression, several Soviet officials have subsequently indicated that minor adjustments might be possible. At the same time, the Soviets have denounced the concept of "defensible borders" for Israel, charging that this is simply a cover

RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977

for Israeli refusal to return strategic territories occupied in 1967. The Soviets contend that the only equitable approach to the matter of security is to have temporary demilitarized zones on both sides of the established borders.

Other positions endorsed by the Soviets include guarantees of a peace settlement either by the UN Security Council or by the USSR, US, Britain, and France, a plan reportedly designed specifically to exclude China. The Soviets also maintain that the state of war between Israel and the Arabs should end when the last Israeli soldier is withdrawn from occupied Arab territory and that peaceful relations should then be established. They support the establishment of a Palestinian state in Gaza and on the West Bank.

While stressing their own leadership role in peace talks, the Soviets have simultaneously criticized recent US efforts, specifically President Carter's recent references to "defensible borders" and the desirability of a "homeland" for the Palestinians. On the question of a "homeland," they have charged that the Palestinians already have a "homeland" and do not need a major power to assign it to them. Similarly, they have accused Sadat of adhering to US and Israeli positions. While trying to undermine possible unilateral US moves toward a settlement, the Soviets have repeatedly emphasized the desirability of Soviet-US cooperation in working toward the Geneva Conference. They have suggested, for example, that the May meeting between Secretary of State Vance and Foreign Minister Gromyko in Geneva will contribute to this effort.

The Soviets will undoubtedly continue to stress their own role in the negotiating process in coming weeks. It is likely that their level of activity will keep pace with that of the US as they strive to demonstrate their equal status and role. They will probably continue to highlight their own ability to contribute constructively to the negotiating process and will remain critical of initiatives undertaken unilaterally. At the same time, the Soviets will want to demonstrate the necessity of including them in the peace talks by communicating their ability to obstruct progress toward

RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977

such talks. Their strong support of Arafat remains an important means to this end. Therefore, while they will probably continue to push for Palestinian moderation, they will simultaneously continue to promote the Palestinian cause and seek to bolster Arafat. [REDACTED]

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RP ASU 77-008
21 April 1977

Secret

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